

Reading Summary
Moltmann A Theology of Hope

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Overview

Rather than placing it in a section at the end of his theology, Moltmann re-positions the doctrine of Eschatology at the center of his [A] *Theology of Hope*. Moltmann defines the doctrine of Eschatology as “doctrine of the Christian hope, which embraces both the object hoped for and also the hope inspired by it...forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set.” (P 16).

Major Themes

The first major theological theme in Moltmann’s work concerns the relationship between Eschatology and God’s self-revelation. For Moltmann, the doctrine of Eschatology is closely linked to the doctrine of God’s self-revelation. He surveys major theologians in a path moving from the exegesis toward the application of the incorporating Eschatology into the doctrine of God’s self-revelation, noting the failures of theologians’ attempts at such an incorporation.

The next major theological theme in Moltmann concerns his rejection of *logos* (word) theology, arguing instead of for theology of “promise.” (P 42) He contrasts both theologies this way:

Revelation’ in this event has not the character of logos-determined illumination of the existing reality of man and the world, but has here constitutively and basically the character of promise and is therefore of an eschatological kind. ‘Promise’ is a fundamentally different thing from a ‘word-event’ which brings truth and harmony between man and the reality that concerns him. (P 85)

Moltmann also examines how the theology of “promise” unfolds throughout the Old Testament, setting the stage for his New Testament discussion on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Another major theological theme of Moltmann concerns further how he views the self-revelation of God. While Moltmann affirms God as revealed in Jesus Christ, he rejects other theologians views of God transcending time and places God (and Jesus Christ) within time as pointing toward a future reality.

One of the central major theological themes in Moltmann and the heart of his work focuses on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the starting point of his eschatological-focused theology. However, for Moltmann, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not an actual historical event. Rather, he re-defines history and reality, as well as applies a Hegelian (dialectical) tension between the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in which the resurrection of Jesus Christ ushers in a new eschatological reality.

Another major theological theme of Moltmann concerns his discussion on the kingdom of God. For Moltmann, the kingdom of God does not concern a separate world. Rather, his eschatological kingdom of God is a transformation of this world into a better place, utilizing social Gospel and somewhat Marxist tones, as well as not a clear distinction between the present reality and future fulfillment since he brings the future to today in his concept of hope. Such a view is in contrast with a biblical view of Eschatology.

One final major theological theme of Moltmann is focusing on an Exodus figure concerning God by placing God continually “before us.” (P 16) His emphasis of such impacts his kingdom of God theology, his social Gospel application, as well as fits within his eschatologically-centered theology.

Study/Discussion Questions

1. Moltmann titles his work *A Theology of Hope* (not *Systematic Theology*, *Dogmatic Theology*, *Church Dogmatics*, etc.). How does Moltmann define “hope”? Why is “hope” central to his theological methodology? What theological loci is Moltmann emphasizing with regard to “hope” (Soteriology? Eschatology?) Read over the Introduction and Chapter 1, as well as consult some theological dictionaries on Moltmann’s background to form a discussion answer.

2. What is the role of “history” in Moltmann’s theology, and how does Moltmann’s role of “history” in his theology compare with another major theologian such as Pannenberg? (See Chapter 1, Part 7; Chapter 2; Chapter 4)

3. Building upon the previous question, how does Moltmann’s theological understanding of “history” apply to Moltmann’s presentation of the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? How does the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ fit into Moltmann’s overall theological emphasis on “hope”? (See Chapter 3, especially round Parts 6-8).

4. Discuss Moltmann’s position concerning the kingdom of God, contrasting Moltmann with other major theologians concerning the kingdom of God (See Chapter 3, Part 13).

5. What does Moltmann mean when he states that the “God whom we therefore cannot really have in us or over us but always only before us” (P 16)?